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SUBJECT: OCTOBER 16 HLTF: ALLIES COMMITTED TO A UNIFIED AND
MEASURED CFE APPROACH THAT DOESN'T PULL THE PLUG

REF: A. (A) STATE 109280
 1B. (B) HLTF-N(2008)0029(INV)

Classified By: Classified by: CDA Kate Byrnes, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY. At the October 16 NATO High Level Task Force (HLTF) meeting and meetings on the margins, Allies discussed potential next steps on CFE (based largely on U.S. ideas presented at the September 11 HLTF, and a Czech paper distributed just prior to this HLTF meeting) and addressed how NATO can best use the November 5-7 Romanian-hosted HLTF off-site to examine options for a way ahead on CFE and formulate a solid message for upcoming NATO and OSCE Ministerials. Key points:

-- Allies confirmed the core message of the September 11 HLTF, that they are unwilling to consider taking any steps in the near-term) such as ceasing to implement CFE vis a vis Russia) that could make it any easier for the Russians to pull out of CFE.

-- Some Allies (led by Turkey, supported by Romania, the UK and the U.S.) stressed the importance of developing a unified NATO message for the Ministerials. Turkey proposed, without dissent, that the Allies use the HLTF off-site in early November to identify key themes for the CFE portion of the communique. Substantively, the message should underscore our collective commitment to CFE and to creative solutions) specifically the parallel actions package) and address Russia,s actions in Georgia in a way that is consistent with longstanding principles and support for Georgia,s territorial sovereignty.

12. (C) On broader issues:

-- The HLTF Chair (NATO ASYG Martin Erdmann) opened the meeting by providing important context for the discussion by describing at length the development of the Allies, position on NATO-Russia cooperation, largely based on the August 19 Ministers, statement. Erdmann noted that while NATO Allies are embroiled in an internal debate to achieve a common interpretation of &no business as usual& in NATO-Russia, the European Union and OSCE are fully engaged with Russia, leaving NATO as the only institution that has &downsized& its interaction.

-- French HLTF Rep Jacques Raharinaivo then provided a detailed explanation of the substance of President Sarkozy,s October 8 speech in Evian, underscoring that Sarkozy chose to respond to President Medvedev,s speech to prevent the appearance that he was accepting Medvedev,s proposals on the future of European security. END SUMMARY.

13. (C) NATO-RUSSIA RELATIONS POST 8-8-08. As a means of providing context for the HLTF effort on CFE, the Chair (Erdmann) opened the meeting with a review of discussion in the NATO Senior Political Committee on defining a medium-term NATO-Russia strategy. Erdmann said flatly that differences have emerged among Allies on how to define the August 19 NAC Ministerial decision that NATO would not do &business as

usual with Russia.⁸ His main point was straightforward: as NATO Allies debate whether individual meetings should occur, NATO's political role is being marginalized while the OSCE and the EU) as well as individual Allies) engage Russia. This will necessarily color engagement on CFE as well, he observed.

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CONTACTS and BILATERALS
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¶4. (C) FRANCE REPORTS ON EVIAN. The French HLTF rep (Raharinaivo) provided details concerning the October 8 President Medvedev and President Sarkozy speeches at the Evian World Policy Conference in which France appeared to have endorsed Russia's European Security Treaty proposal. Medvedev's decision to give a speech on the future of European security, and not stick to the financial crisis at hand, caught the French by surprise. The French rep reported that Sarkozy received a copy of Medvedev's speech just hours in advance of delivery, and thus was faced with a choice of reacting or not responding at all - potentially implying agreement. Raharinaivo suggested both speeches should be reviewed together and highlighted some key points:

-- Medvedev invited all European countries to an essentially ad hoc forum; Sarkozy clearly said the OSCE) to include North America) was the place to discuss it;

-- Medvedev referred to Europe throughout his speech; Sarkozy repeatedly used from Vladivostok to Vancouver⁸ to leave no doubt as to the geography in play;

-- Medvedev was interested in talking about a mix of security issues as varied as non-conventional arms control, terrorism, and counter-narcotics; Sarkozy deliberately mentioned conventional arms control and human rights;

-- Regarding Medvedev's area of influence concept, Sarkozy stressed that &what is near abroad, for Russia is near abroad, for Europe too;⁸

-- On the question of an OSCE Summit prior to the end of 2009, the French rep explained the date was intended to be close enough to keep Russia from criticizing Allies for not responding, but far enough away to buy time for Allies to develop a unified approach. France recognizes, he said, that in reality events could intervene to cause the dates to slip even further.

¶5. (C) OTHER CONTACTS:

-- Belgium: Rep De Witte reported on a September 19 meeting in Sochi (coordinated before August 8) between Prime Ministers Leterme and Putin during which Putin described Russia's envisioned European security architecture much as Medvedev later outlined in Evian. Regarding CFE, Putin stressed that Russia had ratified and implemented⁸ the adapted CFE Treaty which the West had not, and moreover (Putin incorrectly asserted) which the &Baltics had refused to sign.⁸

-- Greece: Rep Daskarolis briefed Allies on October 13 discussions in Athens between the head of the Greek OSCE Task Force and Russian Ambassador Voronkov on the upcoming Greek OSCE Chairmanship. In this meeting Russia outlined its European security architecture proposal along the lines of Evian but indicated that the platform for this architecture was not yet clear, specifying both the OSCE and UN in Geneva as possibilities. Greece highlighted President Sarkozy's proposal for an OSCE summit in 2009 and also offered that the upcoming OSCE Ministerial in Helsinki should be seriously considered for further discussion. On CFE, Russian reps remarked to their Greek counterparts that the U.S.-Russia track had failed) it was time to seek another such as the JCG) and that Russia had no intentions of doing away with CFE which is an integral component of European security architecture and should be part of a larger Treaty.

-- Bulgaria: Rep Georgiev reported on both a Prime Ministers, meeting in Sochi on the economy and Georgia, as well as discussions in Moscow with Ambassador Voronkov similar to the Greek discussions. Georgiev added that Voronkov also noted the upcoming Chairmanship of Kazakhstan (2010) as an opportunity for an OSCE Summit and indicated that CFE discussions with the U.S. had stopped altogether.

-- The Netherlands: Rep Kleinjan questioned France in particular, and the group at large, on what the intent of an OSCE Summit would be, noting that a summit should have a clear deliverable or intended result; Kleinjan cautioned that Medvedev would likely read this as an answer to Russia's proposal.

-- U.S.: U.S. Rep State/VCI DAS Karin L. Look expressed skepticism regarding Russian proposals for a new European security architecture, particularly at a time when Russia is undermining an important component of the Euro-Atlantic architecture) CFE and the principles that are its foundation. She echoed the Dutch comments on the need for a clear purpose for an OSCE Summit and confirmed that A/S Fried had postponed CFE talks with Antonov for the time being but had not taken the parallel actions package off the table.

-- United Kingdom: Rep Ford indicated that Foreign Secretary Miliband had met with Foreign Minister Lavrov on the margins of the UN General Assembly to seek further details on the Medvedev's five foreign policy principles, namely on the right to protect Russian citizens and the right to spheres of influence. (Note: Ford had commented in the quad meeting the day prior to the HLTF that he wanted to clarify misleading press reports that indicated Miliband and Lavrov had had a &cozy chat8 on the European Security Treaty when, in fact, it had been more of a questioning session and opportunity to highlight the irony of Russia's position. End Note)

¶6. (C) THE WAY AHEAD. As a basis for discussing next steps on CFE, the HLTF Chair (Erdmann) reiterated U.S. proposals tabled at the September 11 HLTF as well as the discussion on the 11th and then referenced a food for thought by the Czech Republic on a set of proposed &constructive8 steps for Allied delegations in Vienna, and another food for thought by the International Staff on Russia's CFE obligations and the crisis in Georgia (ref B) (both received by the U.S. del only upon arrival at NATO on the 16th). Initially, Erdmann tried to structure the HLTF discussion around the options set out

by the U.S. at the previous meeting. Germany (Biontino) objected, noting that options were missing such as Germany's proposal to separate Georgia and CFE by taking a long term, strategic approach. Erdmann instead structured discussion on the issues contained in the Czech paper to provide focus.

-- Czech Rep Smigolova outlined Prague's paper proposing &consecutive8 steps to respond to Russian non-compliance: reduce the frequency of JCG meetings to once or twice a month; stop implementing CFE vis a vis Russia by reducing Russia's access to Treaty-mandated notifications of changes to military organization/numbers transmitted via the OSCE Communication Network; and finally by not providing annual Allied CFE data to Russia on December 15. Smigolova suggested that a continued &observation8 mode by the Alliance was no longer an act of good will but rather a &manifestation of Allied weakness.8 From the Czech perspective, the proposed steps are technical in nature, not irreversible, and simply meant as a counterbalance to level the playing field.

-- Response to the Czech paper was clear: no Ally who spoke (see para 8), aside from Canada (which was without instructions), was willing to consider seriously the idea that NATO Allies should stop implementing CFE as an actionable step for the December Ministerials.

¶7. (C) On the idea of reducing the frequency of JCG meetings, the UK (Ford)) supported by Canada, Denmark, and the U.S.

) strongly advocated minimizing JCG meetings, citing lack of substance and the prospect that Russia was now scheduled to chair the JCG in December. The Netherlands (Kleinjan), Romania (Micula), Hungary (Molnar) and Turkey (Gun) concurred that Allies should prevent Russia from chairing the JCG in December during the Ministerials, this year's scheduled data exchange, and the anniversary of Russia's suspension, but only advocated technical reasons to cancel or postpone meetings rather than sending any type of political message through a generalized reduction. Italy (Colaceci), Luxembourg (Pilot) and Greece (Daskarolis) noted that JCG meetings can serve as opportunities to explain Allied positions. Luxembourg asserted that &refusing dialogue8 is a sign of weakness. Several noted that Allies have successfully managed JCG discussions and do not need to be micro-managed.

18. (C) Discussion of the Czech proposal that NATO should selectively stop implementing CFE vis a vis Russia was revelatory of increasing Allied reluctance to take any step now that could have the effect of making it easier for Russia to walk away from the Treaty. Allies also worried that if NATO &suspended8 implementation vis a vis Russia, it might appear that we were adopting a Russian approach that we had previously branded as illegal:

-- The U.S. (Look) first disputed the Czech rep's comment that this period had been a &manifestation of Allied weakness8, noting efforts on the parallel actions package and Allies, continued assertion of Treaty (e.g. inspection) rights. Rep Look then observed that we cannot simply withhold data from Russia) that would be illegal (as is Russia's &suspension8) unless we first made critical decisions about Russia's actions and decided to implement those decisions. We would need to make national determinations and statements that Russian actions constituted 1) material breach of Treaty obligations, or 2) brought about a fundamental change in circumstances, or 3) justify the imposition of countermeasures. Look emphasized that these were serious, senior level decisions that could not be easily reversed) and ones that Allies would want to make together. She underscored the need to keep options open over the next six months) to include preparing CFE data for the December exchange and continue planning for inspections during the next Treaty year) as Allies maintain unity of effort in moving forward on CFE while holding onto core principles.

-- Turkey (Gun) concurred this would be a high level political decision and warned that Allies should not criticize Russia and then make the same mistakes.

-- Italy, Romania, and Luxembourg questioned whether the Czech proposed steps would constitute an Allied breach of the Treaty while the UK warned there were legal pitfalls associated with them. Romania suggested that we keep the Czech ideas &in our armory.8 Italy noted there may be merit in some form of reciprocity suggesting that the Alliance might consider &something like8 what the Russians had done) i.e. give an aggregated data summary in lieu of the full exchange.

-- The Netherlands and Denmark expressed the need for caution with the Netherlands stressing that Allies should take no step that would cause the Russians to &pull the plug8 on the Treaty and noting it was too early to discuss such actions now but rather consider them in Romania. Greece wondered if the Czech proposed steps) which Greece claimed would constitute an Allied suspension) were even options for Allies who consider Russia's suspension &illegal.8

-- Canada (Arpin) was the exception offering a preliminary reaction (without instructions) that noted the Czech proposal was a &moderate8 response to Russian suspension, could be reversed, and should remain on the table for discussion in the run up to December formal decisions.

¶9. (C) Postponement of Fried-Antonov Talks. In the HLTF and on the margins, several Allies, notably Turkey, expressed interest in U.S. plans to resume discussions with Russia, but none pressed that doing so was urgent. The U.S. team made clear that A/S Fried was open to the idea of resuming CFE meetings, but that Allies would need to find a way in the CFE context to deal with the fact that Russia has failed to implement the August cease fire agreement. We would need to move forward on CFE in a way that demonstrates not only our desire to preserve the Treaty, but our determination to use CFE to benefit Georgia's security and maintain key principles.

-- Turkey (Gun) said they had hoped for a better result on Georgia than had been achieved at Geneva. Gun said clearly that in the current circumstances Turkey would not urge the U.S. to reengage on the Fried-Antonov channel. Gun stressed the need to save CFE while not ignoring what happened in Georgia. This, of course, had complicated resolution of the Gudauta issue and injected a number of new concerns. Gun suggested that we should hold off on any radical actions that might jeopardize the Treaty and see what happened in Georgia, basically &park this complicated issue8 until developments were more positive and could serve to reenergize the process.

December was not the time to give a radical message to Russia. He hoped that by then there would be reason to ask the U.S. to again see Antonov.

¶10. (C) Allies generally welcomed the I.S. food for thought paper on the CFE implications of Russian actions in Georgia as useful and unexceptionable. The German rep (Biontino), only supported mildly by Italy and Greece, again stressed that Allies should fully separate the issues of Georgia and CFE. Biontino suggested taking a strategic, long term approach on CFE and that discussion on the way ahead should look to the spring following the current period of transition with regard to Georgia and to upcoming elections.

¶11. (C) HLTF Off-Site. Allies endorsed the UK idea of structuring discussions at the November 5-7 Romanian-hosted off-site around scenarios: 1) the possibility that Russia withdraws from CFE (vice continues to suspend implementation); 2) Russia continues its suspension (and there is no immediate progress in U.S.-Russia talks); 3) Russia returns to implementation (and there is progress on the parallel actions package); and 4) the possibility that suspension spreads to other non-NATO states. U.S. rep Look suggested, and it was widely accepted, that Allies also think about whether Russia has an endgame or result in mind (i.e. how does all end in Russia's thinking), and how we can best work with and channel that. Turkey, supported by Romania, the U.S. and UK, underscored the importance of developing a unified NATO message for the Ministerials and using the off-site to identify key themes and tones for the CFE language for the communique. These key elements will likely arise naturally from a discussion of the &scenarios8 sketched by the UK.

¶12. (C) MEETINGS PRIOR TO THE HLTF. Prior to the HLTF, the U.S. met with Quad reps from Germany, France and the UK, as well as conducted bilateral meetings with Romania and Turkey.

During these meetings Allies previewed and discussed the same points that they made in the main HLTF meeting.

¶13. (SBU) NEXT MEETINGS. Regarding the HLTF schedule for the remainder of the year, Allies agreed on the need to meet between the HLTF off-site and the December Ministerials to focus on finalizing the communique language, but did not agree on a specific date since the IS was not in a position to commit to the timing of the draft ministerial text or the availability of meeting rooms. The HLTF meeting following the off-site is tentatively scheduled for November 21. Immediately following the November 5-7 off-site, the IS intends to distribute draft CFE text for the ministerial communique which the HLTF-Deputies would then work prior to the tentatively scheduled Nov 21 HLTF meeting.

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